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# BURDEN-BEARING

*JAMES HAMILTON D.D.*

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360.







# BURDEN-BEARING.

*THREE SERMONS*



BY

JAMES HAMILTON, D.D.

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## SERMON I.

### *BURDEN-BEARING.*

“ Every man shall bear his own burden.”—GAL. vi. 5.

BURDEN-BEARING is one of the least popular forms of human exertion. It seems the very badge of bondage. When Pharaoh inflicted so many cruelties on Israel, the *load they had to carry* is always the prominent idea. “The Egyptians did set over them taskmasters, to afflict them with their *burdens*.” “Moses went out and looked on their *burdens*.” “The king of Egypt said, Get ye to your *burdens*,” as if the skilled labour of the builder and the hard exhaustive toil of the brick-moulder were nothing to the hateful task of the hodman and barrowman.

And most people share the feeling. We don't like to carry a burden, still less do we like to be seen doing it. The burden is associated with the hulks and hard labour, with the hewing of wood and the drawing of water; and except it be the book, which looks learned, or the mus-



ket, which looks martial, we don't like to be caught carrying anything. It is not genteel ; it does not look as if we had a servant under us, to whom we could say, 'Do this, and he doeth it ; Take this, and he taketh it.

Yet we cannot help ourselves. There is a great deal to be carried in this world. In the shape of taxation or personal service, every citizen has got to bear the burden of the State, and most people have to bear more or less the burden of a family, of a business, of some special avocation. And shoulders highly born are often the most heavily burdened. As he looks through his Belgravian window, and sees the coal-heaver carrying the fuel which is to brighten the mansion all winter, the statesman may well envy that grimy giant ; for at dusk there will be an end of this toil, and the broad back will rest it on the empty sacks of the homeward-bound waggon, or on the couch of dreamless slumber. But for the adviser of the Crown—for the man on whom cometh daily the care of all the colonies, or the care of all our commerce—there is no such respite. In the easiest chair the load is still pressing, and it keeps him groaning in his sleep. As the omnibus lets down the rich banker at the gate, and he puts into his breast-pocket the oft-read letter, the tattered boy who with the portmanteau follows him up the avenue is the more lightly laden of the two ; the ragged satellite who

carries the luggage will get a shilling, but Croesus would gladly give a thousand pounds to any one who would carry for him the load which was enclosed in that crumpled letter, but which has now got farther in and weighs upon his heart, and which he will have to carry up into that drawing-room, nor unbind as he sits down at that brilliant dinner-table, and under which he will have to move up and down the ball-room, smiling, dancing, gaily jesting, as he trips to and fro on his invisible tight-rope, an anxious, overladen acrobat.

For every man has his own burden. There is, first of all, the burden of personal responsibility. As we read in the foregoing verse: "Let every man prove (or examine) his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." It is perfectly true, and we rejoice to remember, that the very foundation of Christianity is the vicarious principle—the substitution for the many sinful of the sinless One; but quite compatible with this, and co-ordinate, is the other principle of individual accountability. In other words, Christ is the great Burden-bearer—the Lamb of God who beareth (*αἵρω*) the sin of the world; but in order to enjoy the benefit of His interposition, I must distinctly and for myself take advantage of it. In the words of the hymn, I must

" . . . lay my sins on Jesus,  
The spotless Lamb of God,"

and, conscious of my lost estate, must seek a personal share in the common salvation.

This coming to Christ is the commencement of Christianity. It is the first step in religion, and it is a step which each of you must take for himself. No other can do it for you. A friend may pray for you ; a friend may give you good advice or useful information ; he may set the truth vividly before you, or may dispel some of your doubts and difficulties ; but a friend's faith will not be accepted as your faith ; a friend's piety will not insure your salvation.

You may deem this too obvious to need any special mention, and may account it a waste of time the dwelling on such truisms, but far more trite than any truism is the contradiction between our profession and our conduct. Take care lest you yourself fall into this fallacy ; take care lest you be resting on another's faith when you should be resting on your own Saviour. True, you have a godly father and a praying mother, but do you pray yourself ? Are you yourself living godly, righteously, and soberly ? True, you are surrounded by Christian people, but are you yourself one of them ? "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," and, when we do so, no fellow-creature can answer for us,—“Every one of us shall give account of himself to God,”<sup>1</sup>—every one of us must then bear his own burden, and if he has

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiv. 10, 12.

not sought salvation betimes, he will find that the blame is altogether his own.

So, my dear friends, let every man prove his own work, so as to have rejoicing in yourself alone, and not in another. Be not content to belong to a Christian family—do not take for granted that you are a Christian because you are in many good things associated with Christian people ; but see to it that you are really resting on the foundation which God Himself has laid ; that you have really given yourself to the service of the Saviour ; and if there is any doubt, do it, and do it at once ; take with you words ; make the matter explicit to yourself ; and for this end do not use customary or conventional language, which is too apt to be a mere compliment to the Most High, and so a mere quietus to our own conscience. But with all distinctness and all reverence tell the Saviour what is your impression of His character and His claims, and if you really feel that His Atonement is sufficient, and that His claims are paramount, give yourself up to Him as a sinner who would be saved by His merits, as a subject and servant who is willing to be governed by His rules, and who would fain live to His glory. So shall you have rejoicing in the Lord Jesus as your own Saviour, your own Master and Friend, and not another's ; and instead of the precarious profession which is propped up by the surrounding piety, and which draws its chief comfort

from the good opinion of its neighbours, yours will be the clear personal persuasion of one who knows whom he has believed, and who can say, "I am the Lord's, and He is mine."

Let every man examine his own sincerity, for every man must bear his own burden—the burden of his own sin—unless he has transferred it to the appointed Saviour.

This personal responsibility comes out still further in the formation of character. We have a comprehensive rule and a perfect pattern, and it is the business of our lives, the burden of the Lord, to be building ourselves up in our holy faith, adding to ourselves every excellence. But instead of proving their own work, and making progress with it, many derive an unsatisfactory comfort from the defects of others. "A man is overtaken in a fault," and there is at once a subtle self-complacent feeling, "God, I thank thee that I am not as that man." "Here is a religious profession which has exploded in fraud and downright dishonesty; here is a man who passes muster amongst the godly, but I would rather beg my bread than earn it by his screwiness and shabbiness; here is another who subscribes to societies and sits on committees, but he is a perfect tyrant at home, and I often fear lest his terrible temper should one day end in some frightful tragedy." It may be so; but suppose you employed a workman, and, at the close of the day, when he came for

his wages, there was no progress made, but he told you a long story how he had taken his walks abroad, and what shameful scamping work was going on at Victoria Villas—how they were running up mere shells, which would hardly hold together till the tenant came in; and did you hear that shocking story of the new house in Paradise Place, which came down when they were putting on the roof, and killed the foreman carpenter? It may be so, would be your answer, but you should have minded your own business. You were employed to rear this structure, not to run about and espy the faults of others; but all day long you have never laid a brick nor touched a trowel. You wicked and slothful servant, you quit my service, nor shall you receive one farthing of my money.

We are here under the guidance of God's Word and Spirit to form our own character, day by day building ourselves upward, and there is great risk of deceiving ourselves. There is the risk of mistaking for personal progress our perception of others' shortcomings; there is the risk of confounding the critical with the constructive faculty, and so fancying that we ourselves must be something superior, because we see so clearly the infirmities and failings of others; and there is the risk of taking for our standard not the requirements of God's own Word, but the attainments of

the society around us ; and "if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another."

There is the burden of Toil. Among the steep precipitous mountains of Thibet the traveller meets long processions of hungry, ill-clad Chinamen, carrying enormous loads of tea. There they go, many of them old men, and women and children even, climb, climbing day after day up the rough sides of the mountain, each with his great burden on his back, eyes fixed on the ground, all silent, stepping slowly, and leaning on great iron-pointed sticks, till the leader of the gang gives the signal for a halt, and, after standing a few minutes, "the heavy weight again falls on the back and head, the body is again bent towards the ground, and the caravan is once more in motion."<sup>1</sup> You do not wonder that, with a task so monotonous, these poor drudges should acquire a dreary stupid look, little better than beasts of burden ; and you feel sorry for those in whose lives there is a large amount of the like irksome and exhausting routine. And yet there are many who, in order to earn their daily bread, must go through a similar task ; for hours together every day of the life-long history plying a vocation which does not improve the mind

<sup>1</sup> Huc's *Chinese Empire*, ch. 1.

nor engage the feelings ; ministering to the instruction or enjoyment of others, with small participation themselves ; fashioning the musical instrument, but seldom present at the musical festival ; fabricating the beautiful garment, but themselves in coarse attire ; setting up the types, but seldom reading the consecutive pages of the philosopher or poet ; carrying the fragrant packages which are to cheer and comfort the stranger, but exiles from the Flowery Land where they were gathered, and aliens in the wealthy land to which they are conveyed.

And the burden of Sorrow. "Sorrow dwells beneath a king's robe as much as beneath a peasant's cloak ; the star of the noble, the warrior's corslet, the courtier's silken vesture, cannot shut it out. That rural home is such a picture of peace, we cannot believe that care or tears are there. That noble castle amidst ancient trees is surely lifted up in its calm grandeur above sighs and sadness. Alas ! it is not so. Man is the tenant of both, and wherever man dwells sorrow is sure to be with him."<sup>1</sup> And some griefs are very burdensome. The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and there are griefs which you must carry alone. Here is a manly spirit struggling with adverse circumstances, and striving to provide things honest in the sight of men, who little guess how much the effort costs him. There is a nature nobler

<sup>1</sup> Kennaway's *Sermons* (1845), i. 152, altered.



still, who, mated to a savage or a sot, contrives to hide the faults which she cannot cure, and with the halo of her own saintliness gives a charm to her abode often not so obvious in a happier home. Here is one who, taking counsel with his soul, has sorrow in his heart daily, perplexed by mysteries in Providence, or brooding over those hard questions which man will still insist on asking, though hopeless of the answer. And yonder is another, who is carrying to the grave a hidden grief—a grief which no other can divide, for there is no chance that he will ever make it known, and which with the secluding effect of a mournful secret helps to make him a stranger in the earth; that pensive smile in which the old, the original man, looks out nor leaves that impress on the countenance which, like an escutcheon above the gate, tells that at some unknown date a great joy went forth to return no more; the silent deserted look which the house puts on when there are chambers which no one enters now, and which no longer expect an occupant; a soul with affections for which the owner has now no use, and in a little corner of which himself dwells dimly, like the forfeited peer hiring apartments in the castle which was once his own.

The very body sometimes grows burdensome; so weak, so tortured, so disobedient to the mind, so powerless for all effective performance, taking up so much time, costing so much

trouble. However airy and spacious the tent once was, now that it has collapsed—now that the main prop has broken, and now that in cold and clammy folds the wet canvas enclasps us—we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, and would fain escape from the ruin to a mansion more lightsome and permanent, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Every man must bear his own burden; and yet, as we have said, there is one burden which it is wrong to bear. It is a sin and a shame to you if you are still plodding along under the burden of unpardoned transgression; a sin and a shame, for you refuse Him who saith, Come to me, ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; a sin and a shame, for you frustrate the grace of God, and practically declare that it is better this burden should be borne by yourself than transferred to the sin-bearing Surety. And as long as guilt remains unconfessed and unforgiven, you are weak for the other burdens which must be borne; the best energies of the soul are absorbed and wasted in the sullen endurance of a misery from which God in the Gospel offers to free you, and with fear of God's anger or a doubtful sense of His favour, you go heavily and work heartlessly, and, like a man walking in fetters, feel every load doubled, so long as you are a burden to yourself.

The load of guilt, the feeling that our sin is

too great for the blood of Christ to expiate, or the grace of God to pardon,—this burden it is wrong to bear ; but there are other things given us to carry, some of them the lot of humanity, and some of them manifestly the appointment of Providence—so manifestly that they might almost be inscribed “The burden of the Lord ;” — pain and sorrow, responsibility, special and arduous service, implication in the fate of others—some things there are which we cannot shift off, and some which it will be more to our advantage and credit if we carry manfully, cheerfully, Christianly.

Amongst those who want situations there is no class more numerous than “light porters,” but in the Lord’s great house of this world there are few appointments for such—few porters wanted who will have nothing to carry ; and some who, like Issachar, couch down between the burdens, who want to take life easily, and so evade the task which the moment brings, only entail extra toil and sorrow on their life’s remainder. “Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens, for he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant,” and so leaving others to fight the Philistines, he chose an early settlement and a tempting location. The consequence was, that he was never thenceforth entirely his own master. He bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a *servant to tribute*. The strong ass was lazy,

and couched down between the burdens, but the burdens were sponges, and the place where Issachar lay down was the middle of the ford, and so he rose up far more weighted than before he couched down, and went on his way dejected and heavily laden.

Bear your burden manfully. Boys at school, young men who have exchanged boyish liberty for serious business—all who have got a task to do, a work to finish—bear the burden till God gives the signal for repose—till the work is done and the holiday is fairly earned.

The burden, rightly carried, will do you good. There was a notion in the time of Pliny, that the way to make the palm-tree perpendicular was to load it. If it leaned on one side there attach a weight, and, with a noble resistance, it would incline the other way and recover its erectness. And sure enough some of the most upright and most aspiring Christians are the most heavily laden. The weight which would have broken down a poorer spirit, which would have dragged into the mud the mere earthling, shows that there is One in them who is not in the world, and, whilst it cures them of the general crookedness, it gives an impulse to their growth, and sends them far above our heads—far above the dust, straight and strong, with branches bright and ever green, and pointing to Heaven.

O Christian, no sorrow need crush you, for,

when the worst comes to the worst, "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." That burden may make you grave, your steps measured, and your features sedate or anxious, but there are worse sights than seriousness, and to a wise man it is a comfort to see that all are not frivolous and bent on mere amusement. That burden may make you sigh. If so, it makes you none the less like to Him who, with all conditions of life to choose from, chose a sad one, and who in bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows, at last became sorrowful even unto death. But whatever it does, that burden need never break your back nor crush out your spirit. Through Christ strengthening, you are well able to bear it, and if you learn the right art of carrying, it will grow a great deal easier—it will improve your gait—and whilst it enables you to serve your generation, it will make especially welcome the journey's end, with its "Rest and be thankful."

*BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS.*





## SERMON II.

### *BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS.*

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”—GAL. vi. 2.

SERIOUSNESS, if it be not enlightened and warmed by the Gospel, is apt to degenerate into mere superstition. If our conception of the Most High be cold and contracted, instead of serving Him with gladness—instead of walking before Him in love and glorious liberty,—we shall try to propitiate Him with punctilious rites, and rigid, perhaps painful, observances.

With the Galatian Christians it had been a short-lived summer. They were originally a devout and desirous people (Jews), whose reverential sentiments had been developed and deepened by the Mosaic economy, and when Christ was revealed to them as the end of the law for righteousness, they were filled with relief and rejoicing. On the one hand, it was unspeakable relief to find the law fulfilled—the



bow which for so many centuries had found no man of might sufficient, now fully bent by the Captain of Salvation, and through the golden centre of supreme fulfilment the arrow sent unerring. On the other hand, it was a joy to find God dwelling in the midst of men, as present as the promise of a disappearing Saviour, and as propitious as the acceptor of that Saviour's sacrifice. In Jesus Christ, "evidently set forth" and rightly understood, they found emancipation from the legal spirit, and at the same time the inspiration of a new obedience. They joyed in God as those who had received the Atonement, and they not only walked at liberty, but they ran. They ran in the way of God's commandments, and so "ran well." They were "new creatures," no longer creeping timidly, and at every fearful sound anxious and arrested, reptile-fashion, but eagles mounting upward on soaring pinion, seeking the nearer sunshine, and in all the wide horizon seeing nothing that could harm them.

That short summer was ended. They had allowed Judaizing teachers to come in between them and Christ crucified: the sun was intercepted,—the light and warmth of the Gospel—and they were growing very like their former selves, legal, punctilious, hampered, trusting a little in Christ, but a great deal more in their own circumcision, and full of those evil passions which come into the mind when the Spirit

God goes forth. They were hardly "new creatures" any longer, for they were more in Moses than "in Christ." "Fallen from grace," their wings were broken, and, instead of soaring or running, they grovelled,—regarded as lost men by their former co-religionists, and yet with a very scanty enjoyment of the Gospel salvation.

Practically, many Christians are in the same position. They are as much *in* Moses as "in Christ," and not so much new creatures as anomalous creatures—like the Galatians, a sort of griffin, or dragon, or winged reptile—with an eye not made for looking at the sun, and with pinions which rarely lift them into higher regions—which rarely give them the wide horizon and the dwelling-place, at once secure and serene, of those who, upborne by the Comforter, look down at safe distance on the snare of the fowler and the noisome pestilence. Instead of looking at Christ till they imbibe from Him strength and joy, holy aspiration and confidence Godward—instead of looking at Christ till He draws them upward, out of their selfishness, out of their sin, out of their unbelief, on towards Himself, they look at faith, or they look at conversion, and wonder how they are to get it; and as it is a very dim comfort that they derive from the Saviour, so it is a very faint reflection of His spirit and character which comes through their murky atmosphere.

This is a long introduction, but it is not irrelevant. This letter is addressed to people who were losing their Christianity, and who, as a consequence, were becoming cross-grained and critical, controversial and quarrelsome, and more inclined to "bite and devour" one another (v. 15) than to bear one another's burdens. And in order to understand our text, it is absolutely essential to look back a little way, and see the purport of the exhortations preceding.

Chapter v. 13-15. Christ is the Emancipator. From the yoke of ordinances and punctilious observances He has released you, and the strength which was once needful for burdensome ceremonies is now available for a more blessed and benevolent business, loving service to one another. You are zealous for the law, but its essence may be expressed in one sentence,—Love thy neighbour as thyself. You who are Christians are to be mutual comforts, mutual conservators, and even if a man be overtaken in a fault, do not at once cast him off. Ye who claim to be spiritual, by every kind and wise effort seek to recover him, and restore his soul into the paths of righteousness. Let his fall be your sorrow, his recovery your study. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ;" that law spoken of in ch. v. 14.

The law of Jesus Christ was loving-kindness His business was benevolence, and He Himse

was pre-eminently the great Burden-Bearer. If we would resemble Him, we must

(1.) Raise up the fallen. This was hardly ever attempted till Christ set the pattern. People went wrong, and the world let them go; they broke the laws, and the magistrate punished; they became a scandal, and society cast them out,—out of the synagogue, out of the city, out of the world. But with a moral tone infinitely higher, Christ taught a more excellent way. Having come to seek and to save that which was lost, He sent the Church on the same errand, and by parables like the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son, not only did He open the door of hope to the foolish wanderer and the worthless profligate, but by the poor outcasts over whom He pronounced words of pardon and pity, and the mad demoniacs whom He dispossessed and tamed and brought to their right mind, He showed the omnipotence of kindness—He showed that, far as man's wickedness can go, Divine compassion can go further. He showed that fierce as is man's depravity, the Spirit of God is stronger.

And, my dear friends, those of you are most Christ-like who are most compassionate—not the most tolerant of evil, but the most intent on saving the transgressor. In almost every case of criminality there is a great deal to provoke and irritate; but after all, is there not more to pity? Is it not sad to see a soul embruted and

debased, shut out from pure and holy pleasures, and led captive by the devil at his will? Is it not sad to think of its undone eternity, and of the long hopeless anguish which awaits it, unless you or some friendly angel come betimes to its rescue? And is it not sad to picture the evil it may propagate, the much good which it may destroy unless its career be arrested, and the numbers which it may involve in its ruin? Oh, you do well who, in the spirit of the Master, go after the one lost sheep in the wilderness. You do well who take pains, and put yourself about to reclaim a single wanderer. Happy will you be if you snatch one brand from the burning—if you turn one sinner from the error of his ways, and so save from death an immortal soul.

(2.) Bear the infirmities of the weak (Rom. xv. 1). That is, hold up those who are in danger of falling. A nurse cherishing her children has a good deal of trouble with the one who is beginning to go alone; it is a time so fruitful in falls and contusions and soiled dresses; still it is better to take some pains and teach the art of walking, rather than to have to carry him all his days. And the invalid—the convalescent, may a little tax your strength as you give him your arm in his first tottering journey round the garden, but you do not grudge it; you are thankful that he is come this length, and for the walk of to-day he wil'

be stronger to-morrow. Rather trying are the infirmities of the weak. Very tiresome is a continual touchiness in a neighbour, or the perpetual recurrence of the same faults in a pupil or a child. But if by self-restraint and right treatment God should enable you to cure those faults, from how much shame and sorrow do you rescue *them*—from how much suffering *yourself*! Don't grudge the trouble, and remember that in this form of effort there can never be total failure—in trying to cure the patient, the physician heals himself. In combating his bad temper, you are obliged to conquer your own; and in order to expel from that other sullenness, self-indulgence, petulance, you are compelled to go to God, and beg for your own spirit a larger supply of sweetness, generosity, long-suffering, and all those noble radiant attributes, which in the contest with depravity make the sun-like Christian more than conqueror.

(3.) It is not the lesson of the text, but it is not alien from the context when we add, "Bear one another's trials." Some are heavy laden. With one it is the burden of poverty; with another it is pain or failing strength, the extinction of a great hope, or the loss of some precious faculty. You are a Christian, and he is your neighbour. Lend a hand, and help him with his load. Be eyes to the blind, feet to the lame. That poor widow, try to find employment

for the eldest child, and instruction for the rest. That garment which you yourself care to wear no longer might still give warmth and comfort to joints which already feel presentiments of winter. That sum of money which you had destined for a day of pleasure or some festive demonstration might be the apprentice-fee of some friendless lad, or might extricate from crushing difficulties a deserving family, and so, without ceasing to be a day's pleasure to you, might prolong itself into the thankful years of the one, the prosperous lifetime of the other.

“Bear one another's burdens.” A little thing will sometimes ease the pressure. In a country road you have seen the weary beast with foaming flanks straining onward with the overladen cart, and ready to give in: when the kindly waggoner called a halt, and, propping up the shaft with a slim rod or a stake from the hedge-row, he patted and praised the willing creature, till after a little rest they were ready to resume the rough track together. Many a time a small prop is quite sufficient. A zealous female teacher amongst the Nestorians writes to a friend, “It was Sabbath afternoon, and I was seated on a mat in the middle of the earthen floor of the church. I had already attended Sabbath-school and a prayer-meeting with my pupils, and weary I longed for rest. Then I remembered that after that came my meeting

with the women readers of the village, and oh, how desirable seemed rest! But God sent it in an unexpected way, for a woman came and seated herself directly behind me, so that I could lean on her, and she invited me to do so. I declined, but she drew me back, saying, 'If you love me, lean hard.' Very refreshing was that support. Then came the Master's own voice, repeating the words, 'If you love *me*, lean hard;' and I leaned on Him too, feeling that it was Himself who had preached me a sermon through that poor woman. I was rested long before the services were over; then I spent an hour with the women, and after sunset rode six miles to my own home. I wondered that I was not weary that night nor next morning, and I have rested ever since on those sweet words, 'If you love me, lean hard.'"<sup>1</sup> Often a very slender support will suffice, and many is the burden which a timely word has lightened, a recognising nod, a cheering smile, a cup of cold water, a lift in the home-going car, or half-an-hour's help from a stronger arm or more experienced fingers.

By thus bearing others' burdens you fulfil the law of Christ. His plan for the renovation of society does not leave out Self-Help, whilst all through it proceeds on the assumption of Heavenly Help; but at the same time it leaves

<sup>1</sup> *Woman and her Saviour in Persia* (Boston, 1863), p. 64.



large place for mutual help, the help which having received from God we give to one another. *God's way for making the world's burden less is to make the Church's shoulders stronger.* "Lord, increase our faith," make the molecule, the atom, at least as large as a mustard-seed, for then we could remove the mountain. Our resources are sufficient if the vital force were present. We have a Bible sufficient for the world's enlightenment, a Gospel sufficient for the world's salvation, a Saviour sufficient for the world's enrichment; but till our faith, our heart, our fervour be at least as large as a grain of mustard-seed, we cannot move the mountain, we cannot lift the world, we cannot heave off that mighty load of misery which a ruined race have pulled down upon themselves. O Saviour, give us a grain of faith, a grasp of Thee, however feeble, some small portion of Thy Spirit, that we may fulfil Thy law, and, loving our neighbour as ourself, may draw him on to the love of Thee.

By thus bearing others' burdens you will lighten your own. Rogers the poet has preserved a story which was told him by a Piedmontese nobleman. "I was weary of life, and, after a melancholy day, was hurrying along the street to the river, when I felt a sudden check. I turned and beheld a little boy, who had caught the skirt of my cloak in his anxiety to solicit my notice. His look and manner were

irresistible. Not less so was the lesson he had learnt : 'There are six of us, and we are dying for want of food.' Why should I not, said I to myself, relieve this wretched family? I have the means, and it will not delay me many minutes. The scene of misery he conducted me to, I cannot describe. I threw them my purse, and their burst of gratitude overcame me. It filled my eyes; it went as a cordial to my heart. 'I will call again to-morrow,' I cried. Fool that I was, to think of leaving a world where such pleasure was to be had, and so cheaply."<sup>1</sup> There is many a load which only grows less by giving a lift to another. Life itself is apt to grow burdensome to the self-centred pleasure-seeker, and there are some who in resultless speculations become so absorbed and exhausted that their intellectual being becomes a burden to itself. For such the best prescription is practical philanthropy. Try to do some good. Confront the material evil, the palpable miseries around you, and try to make them less. If you succeed, and you *will* succeed, the happiness of others will be a balm for the healing of your own wounds, and as you advance in the experiment you will land on results which pure reason did not anticipate. You will find that for lessening your own sorrows, it is a good plan to share the sorrows of others, and that for lessening both theirs

<sup>1</sup> Rogers' *Italy*—"Foreign Travel," p. 182.

and yours there is no method so effectual as recourse to a Saviour's sympathy.

In order to bear either your own burden or the burdens of other people, you must take hold of that Saviour's strength. You are weak, but He is mighty. Your own patience will soon be exhausted ; He fainteth not, neither is weary. He alone can so fill you with goodness that, instead of being overcome of evil, you will overcome evil with good ; and in the difficult questions which sometimes occur as to which is the truest kindness or the best form of assisting another, you can have no better adviser than the wonderful Counsellor.

Alas for those who, instead of making the world's load the less, are making it greater. Woe unto you who bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders. Shame to the able-bodied or well-educated youth who, making no exertion for himself, is content to be maintained at the cost of his parents, or by loans borrowed from soft-hearted sisters. Shame and infamy to the sturdy churl whose god is his belly, and who, spending on drink and dainty viands the wages of the week, leaves a thin and haggard wife to earn a subsistence for their hapless children. Woe to you whose cunning indolence shifts over on meek and uncomplaining shoulders the burden you are paid for carrying ; and woe to you whose tyrannical exacting arrogance or

unpleasant splenetic humours are imposing a perpetual burden on all who are the least dependent on you.

How sinful and how sad, and oh, how needless! What a pity that we should be mutual tormentors, when the Lord Jesus invites us to be mutual comforters. If the mind were in us which was in Him, it would not be in the power of circumstances to make us wretched. The devil himself could do us no material damage. But *a dim Gospel makes a cold Christian, a distant Saviour makes a halting, hesitating disciple.* Let us draw so near as to have our doubts and fears dispelled, and let us keep so near that we shall not mistake other marks for the footsteps of the Forerunner,—so near that in our bright benevolence and friendly offices and universal helpfulness we shall be recognised as the followers of that great Burden-Bearer who, though laden with the griefs and sorrows of so many, still went about continually doing good.



*CAST THY BURDEN ON THE LORD.*



*CAST THY BURDEN ON THE LORD.*







### SERMON III.

#### *CAST THY BURDEN ON THE LORD.*

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.”—Ps. lv. 22.

EVERY man must bear his own burden, and it is a fine thing to see any one trying to do it manfully; carrying his cross bravely, silently, patiently, and in a way which makes you hope that he has taken for his pattern the greatest of all sufferers. It is a fine thing to see a man who is himself in trouble, trying not to be troublesome to those around; putting the best face on his affliction, and anxious not to involve others in it. “Lie down, if you please. Your sitting up won’t mitigate my pain, but it will do me good to find that you have enjoyed a night’s sound sleep.” “Thank you for your offered loan. It is tempting, but it could be only a momentary relief, and it is better that only one, instead of two, should be reduced to poverty.”

On most of those whom He loveth, God layeth some burden. He gives them something to carry, and carry *through*, and this burden of the Lord we must not throw down, and run away from it, but we must try how best we can manage it. Like the water-pitchers which Syrian maidens carry on their heads, like the basket of the Neapolitan grape-gatherer, the load is usually so light, — the task, the responsibility, the light affliction, — that, rightly borne, it only improves the bearer's gait; and as he moves along with free and open port, erect and unstooping, it only gives straightforwardness to his regards, and a measured sedateness to his goings, and the bearer looks the better for his burden. The people whom you choose for your friends are not the frivolous, jaunty spirits, free of thought, free of care, and perpetually frisking; but those profound and earnest natures, who, if not acquainted with grief, are at least acquainted with grave thoughts, and whose benevolence is all the brighter because it comes welling up from depths which the ordinary auger cannot open.

Every man must bear his own burden, and as some loads are rather heavy, it is important that each should understand the art of carrying. And without multiplying rules, there are three hints which it would always be well to follow:—

1. A good road is a great relief to a heavy burden. The same weight which would be

insupportable through miry fields or over a broken rocky wilderness, is endurable on the king's highway. The cross which is given you to carry when in the path of duty, will not crush you ; but if you quit the way of the commandment—if you go where there are no footsteps of the Forerunner, or try near paths and evasive, you may either slump through the slough and be drowned in perdition, or with the stiff heavy clay adhering to your sandals, you may find a triple toil—the burden on your back, and the burden at each laden heel.

2. Whether large or little, if the load be hard, you may save yourself by interposing some soft lining. Many a brow would ache less, many a shoulder would not be so chafed and galled, if between that brow and that burden, if between that shoulder and that yoke, there came the famous pad called patience. In Norse Tales, and other books of Northern mythology, you continually read about trolls—frightful creatures which come out of crevices in the mountains and stop travellers in their journey ; but if one of these spirits of darkness be anyhow hindered from getting back to his den before sunrise, the moment a ray of light reaches him, he splits all in pieces, and a few splinters of flint are all that remain of him. There is a lion in the path ; there is a troll in the pass. This long lesson which you, scholar, have got to learn—this disagreeable commission which you, man of busi-

ness, have got to execute—this very unpleasant place which you, servant, have got to fill, comes out and growls, a hideous monster threatening to devour you, and scaring away your happiness. But after all, he is only a troll; he cannot stand sunshine. Turn on him a smiling look, and he is done for,—ugly goblin that he is, give him your brightest, cheeriest look, and not only will he fly all to flints, but perhaps you may espy an angel where the spectre disappeared. Sweetness of spirit, sunshine, is famous for dispelling fears and difficulties; patience is a mighty help to the burden-bearer. To which we just add—

3. The art of packing,—the art of placing and adjusting. You may have met a Swiss mountaineer coming or going from market with so many things on his back, that if it had been proposed to you to carry them you would have been puzzled with the problem how to dispose of them. That pail of milk you might have carried in one hand, and that cheese in another; but what is to be done with this web of linen, and that bunch of onions, and these sprigs of mistletoe, and all that hunting gear? It would need a dozen hands, and not even then, for they are such awkward packages, without holdfast or handle. But on the shelves of his curious perpendicular barrow or carry-all, the clever cow-herd arranges them securely, and slings them to

his shoulders, and trudges on, with his sustaining Alpine stick in one hand, and nothing at all in the other. Some people live at random. They have no arrangement, no method, no forecast. They rush out into the day, clutching at the work which first occurs, and on the top of that comes something else, and then some other thing utterly unexpected, and which had no right to come at all, and they cannot stand it any longer. "What a bother! you see both my hands are already full. Is thy servant a dog, that he can also fetch and carry with his teeth?"—whereas, dear friend, if you had taken five minutes in the morning to think over and arrange the occupations of the day, if one by one you had placed them on that famous frame called prayer, you could have easily shouldered them, and, as with one hand you leaned upon the staff of the promise, the other hand would have been free for any incidental work which was given it to do: and like an orderly carrier depositing his parcels as he passes along, as one little turn and one great task after another were finished, as the hours moved on, you would get home in the evening lightly laden at last.

Every man must bear his own burden; yet, as we saw last Sabbath, it is our duty and privilege to lighten the load of one another; and, what is very remarkable, this is often the best plan for lightening our own. Still it must be

confessed that, whether self-entailed or heaped on us by others, there are some burdens which go beyond our own ability, and in bearing which vain is the help of fellow-creatures. It is therefore unspeakably kind and gracious in the Lord that He invites us to communicate such solitudes and sorrows to Himself, offering to sustain us under them, or rather offering to sustain them in our stead.

A good many summers ago I read in a north-country newspaper :—A gentleman was passing along the side of a field, when a sheep came up so close to him, and bleating so piteously, that his attention was quite arrested. Following to a little distance, he found that a portion of the stone fence had been brought down—most likely by the trespassing sheep themselves leaping over it—in such a way that the ruins held a lamb a fast prisoner. The traveller soon removed the turf and stones, and so little hurt was the young creature, that it at once ran up to its mother, and shook itself as the two went gambolling off together.

“All we like sheep had gone astray,” and in leaping over the fence of God’s law had brought it down in ruin on ourselves. The broken commandment is a living grave to the transgressor, a fence which he cannot repair, and an incubus which he cannot heave off. But, moved with compassion, the Son of God came to the

rescue. In the greatness of His might not only did He lift off the mountain of guilt—the crushing load of a broken law—but in the greatness of His pity He bound up that which was broken; for in this instance the violation of the law had proved the destruction of the transgressor. When we were without strength Christ died for us, and from the curse of the law delivered us by taking all the curse into His own bosom.

Does any one here find himself overwhelmed by his own misdoings? Have you by your sins and follies brought guilt upon your soul? Do you feel, “Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me?” Cry to the Lord, for He only can deliver. Whether it be the collective burden of your general sinfulness, or the special load of some great or recent transgression, His mighty arm alone can lift off the mountain-weight from your conscience, and cast it into the midst of the sea. And such a good Shepherd is He, if you throw yourself on His compassion not only will He pardon your iniquity, however great, but He will heal the hurt, the damage, you have done yourself. He will cause you to hear the voice of joy and gladness, so that the bones which sin had broken shall rejoice. And now that you are restored into the paths of righteousness—now that He is saying, “Go and



sin no more"—watch against the temptations which proved too powerful for you, and in love and thankfulness follow your strong Deliverer.

The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity ; but a wounded spirit or a troubled conscience who can bear ? There are calamities so crushing that the only comforter we can think of is God ; and better is the sorrow that sends us to Him than the prosperity which keeps us away. On the other hand, the burden, the care, or calamity which God helps us to carry, will hurt us far less, and will be much more easily borne, than a minor sorrow to which we bring only our own resources, or at best the aid of a fellow-creature. Hence it is wonderful what feats of performance, and still more, what feats of valiant endurance have been exhibited by those faithful witnesses who were tempted and tortured, who were stoned and sawed in sunder, not accepting deliverance ; and this not because they were men of adamant nerve or iron fibre—for they were men of like passions with ourselves,—but because their felt infirmity sent them back on an unseen Helper, and, enduring as seeing Him who is invisible, out of weakness He made them strong. The great thing is to get our minds in harmony with God ; for "He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Reconciled to Him as revealed in the Gospel, you have entire confidence in all His procedure

because a heartfelt complacency in all His perfections ; and with infallible Wisdom pioneering your path, with providential goodness presiding over your destiny, and with fatherly love every moment accessible, why should you make a burden of what is merely a shadow, and why should you have any real burden and not cast it on the Lord ?

“ Commit thou all thy griefs  
And ways into His hands,  
To His sure truth and tender care  
Who earth and heaven commands.

Then on the Lord rely ;  
So safe shalt thou go on ;  
Fix on His work thy steadfast eye,  
So shall thy work be done.

No profit canst thou gain  
By self-consuming care ;  
To Him commend thy cause ; His ear  
Attends the softest prayer.

What though thou rulest not ?  
Yet heaven and earth and hell  
Proclaim, God sitteth on the throne,  
And ruleth all things well ! ”

Greek mythology fancied that the starry vault was solid and weighty, and to Atlas it assigned the burdensome business of upholding the spheres. And many is the self-elected Atlas

amongst us who hastens forward to uphold the shaking heavens—who feels as uneasy and overburdened as if the throne of the Eternal rested on his shoulder, and who groans in anguish as if the firmament might fall or the course of Providence go wrong.

It is quite needless. There is no occasion for any Atlas, as God has arranged the universe. By the mutual attraction which He has put into all worlds, modified by the impulse which His own will has given to each, He has made their very weight an element in the general welfare—a security for the universal stability. No Atlas is needed to support the spheres, but the sun's attraction is the hand which holds in its place the earth, and which—whatsoever burden Alps and Andes and Himalayas may be to the globe itself—avows that earth's mountains are no burden to the sun.

The believer is no burden to his God, and even if you should be carrying whole mountains of care and solicitude, they don't make yourself more burdensome or your case more difficult to the Creator of the ends of the earth. He fainteth not, neither is weary. The Sun of Righteousness will suffer no kindred spirit to be torn from within the sphere of His attraction: He will not suffer the righteous to be removed.

Such, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter. There are burdens which are bad and

blameworthy, and these it is our duty at once to cast away. Such a burden is the evil conscience, from which the true deliverance is the cross of Christ: such a burden is the easily besetting sin, from which the sanctifying Spirit will set free the vigilant and prayerful Christian. Casting aside these weights, let us run our race. And there are burdens not sinful in themselves, but which, if not managed rightly, may make us a burden to ourselves or to others—some of them “light afflictions,” others abundantly heavy. These, whilst thanking the friends who seek to divide them, let us cast on the Lord.

Low spirits or a languid constitution, is that your burden? Well, it is trying. To the spirited captain in the slow-sailing craft it is trying to be overtaken and passed by one swift cutter after another; but it is wonderful what voyages have been made by skilful navigators in very clumsy concerns, and how much of this world’s work has been done by men like Boyle, and Baxter, and William of Orange, who might have found a perpetual apology, as they found a serious obstacle, in their “often infirmities.” And even though your spirit should not be bright, if your faith be but steadfast, you will hold on your way, and wax stronger and stronger. Your dejection, your despondency, cast on the Lord, and it may please Him to send you the

Comforter to abide with you. The Spirit of Holiness is the Spirit of Happiness, and the more that He fills you with the Gospel the fuller will you be of peace in believing.

Is poverty your burden? "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." He had no need to cry to man, for the Lord was nearer; and even if man had heard, it would not have been much he would have done. He might have *helped* a little, but the Lord *saved*. He might have taken out of one difficulty, but the Lord delivered him from "all his troubles." So, taste and see that God is good. He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He can so bless a scanty provision that its possessor shall be satisfied with bread, and can impart such wealth to penury, that the poor disciple shall make many rich.

Bereavement—a sorrow past or prospective—is it this which weighs you down? Wonderful is it what God can make one being to another, and therefore woful is the blank when such a presence disappears. But just as the clouds of amber or amethyst in the evening sky attract our gaze, and carry our imaginations onward across sun-gilt waters to balmy islands where it is still high day, so in the calm peaceful exit of a believing friend or parent, after the

first burst of anguish has rained itself out, our thoughts are carried gently forward to that land where their sun never sets, and where in Christ the death-divided meet to part no more. And so in love and wisdom through these most painful partings, a loosening, attracting process is carried on, making it perhaps a little easier to quit the earth, and most assuredly investing with new desirableness the Father's House.

"No, you have not named it," does any one reply?—"The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and I know my own burden. It is neither pain nor poverty, nor the loss of friends; but why should I speak of it? Some would not understand it, and no human hand can help me with it." So be it. If man were sufficient for man, there would be no need for religion. If there were no evils from which man could not rescue his brother, there would be no need for a Saviour; if no sorrows under which man could not sustain his fellow-man, there would be no need for a Divine Comfortor. But it is a grief, a care like yours, which makes religion a reality. Carry it to the Throne of Grace, and see if there you do not find mercy to pardon and grace to help in time of need. However difficult to describe, there is there One who can understand it; however remote from the range of ordinary sympathy, there is there a merciful High Priest who can enter into it; and however far beyond

the reach of human help, there is there a Wonderful Counsellor who can either extricate from it or convert it into your higher good.

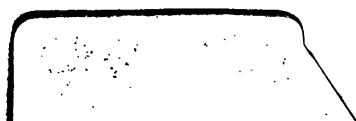
“So with my God I leave my cause,  
From Him I seek relief;  
To Him in confidence of prayer  
Unbosom all my grief.”

THE END.









the 'information' and 'communication' fields. The 'information' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'communication' field is defined as:

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The 'information science' field is defined as:

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